



The Idaho Humanist

The Humanists of Idaho is a chapter of the American Humanist Association and the Council for Secular Humanism. We are a nonprofit corporation organized to promote ethical, democratic, and naturalistic Humanism in the state of Idaho through public awareness, education and community involvement.

June 2008

<http://Idaho.humanists.net>

Idaho@humanists.net

President's Message:

We're Evolving! (a little)

Humanists of Idaho approach the Summer Solstice with much the same, and a little bit of change. The past couple years, we have joined with Idaho Atheists for a Summer Solstice picnic. Unfortunately, that group has become inactive, and no picnic is planned. There will be some solstice celebrating, however, as two HOI members, Paul Verhage and Rachel Balcerzau, are to be married on June 21 by our own Humanist Celebrant, Doug Van Curen. Unfortunately, Paul and Rachel will be moving to Kansas. Fortunately, a new couple joined at our May meeting, so our numbers stay the same!

Our four main officers were re-elected with no challengers. However, we are expanding the number of active members: Jan Rowe's daughter Kari is taking over as Charitable Giving Coordinator and Wally Keltner has agreed to coordinate those planning programs for our meetings. A healthy organization must always get some infusions of new blood. I look forward to the coming year.

Agency for New Americans

Yasmin Aguilar of the Agency for New Americans (ANA) was our featured speaker at our May meeting. Her inspirational plea sparked our plan to discuss a coordinated strategy for charitable giving at our June meeting.

Yasmin came to the US in 2000 as a refugee from Afghanistan. ANA helped her get oriented and settled in a new, foreign culture and country. She found a full-time job with ANA helping new refugees get settled here in Idaho.

ANA works with nine organizations overseas and with the US Department of State to screen and help settle legitimate refugees who face persecution in various forms around the world. ANA is one of three organizations to which the State Dept. allocates refugees to be settled in assigned locations around the US.

A new refugee receives \$200 per month for up to 3 months, and ANA assists in the finding of housing, a job, interpreters when needed, making of doctor appointments, etc. Most refugees take unskilled jobs such as dishwashers, etc., but some are highly trained doctors or engineers. ANA provides classes in English, American culture, and work ethics. ANA always assists refugees without regard to race, sex, color, religion, ethnic group, etc.

About 750 refugees annually get settled in the Boise area. About 250 each are assisted by ANA, International Rescue Committee, or World Relief.

ANA is in constant need of donations of money and household goods, offers for temporary housing, and volunteers. Yasmin can be reached at 208-338-0033, or see www.anaidaho.org.

Humanism is a rational philosophy informed by science, inspired by art, and motivated by compassion. It affirms the dignity of each human being and supports individual liberty consonant with social and planetary responsibility. Humanism advocates participatory democracy, the open society, human rights, and social justice. Free of supernaturalism, it recognizes human beings as part of nature and holds that all values—be they religious, ethical, social, or political—have their source in human nature, experience, and culture. Humanism thus derives the goals of life from human need and interest rather than from theological and ideological abstractions, and asserts that humanity must take responsibility for its own destiny.

—*The Humanist*,
Official publication of the
American Humanist
Association

Humanists of Idaho Monthly Meetings

From 6:30 PM to 7:30 PM we are now the Humanist Supper Club. We invite everyone to arrive whenever they can for dinner and join the group for informal discussion and socializing. At 7:30 we will start our program.

June Meeting, Monday, June 23rd

Planning Meeting

We will kickoff planning for Charitable Giving activities and Programs for the coming year with our new coordinators. Kari Rowe has taken over the coordination of our charitable giving and has some good ideas on possible projects including helping the Agency for New Americans. We will discuss an overall plan to guide our charitable works activities

Wally Keltner is our new Program Manager and he has a plan to get more members involved in our meeting programs. His plan has each month's program activity provided by a volunteer HOI member(s). This "Activity Manager" plans the assigned month's activity and is responsible for all aspects of the month's activity including obtaining and briefing any volunteer presenters, providing any audio/visual items, etc. Wally as program manager will coordinate and advise activity managers.

HOI Officer Elections

At May's meeting the members unanimously reelected the board members:

- President – Paul Rolig –roligpd@spro.net or 377-0535
- Vice President – Doug Van Curen – saw2thking@aol.com or 376-5475.
- Secretary – Nancy Rolig – nrolig@spro.net or 377-0535
- Treasurer – Jan Rowe – janiejolee1@aol.com or 376-5475

Non – Board positions:

- Webmaster and Yahoo Group Administrator. Doug Van Curen. – saw2thking@aol.com or 376-5475.
- Newsletter Editor and Database Administrator. Nancy Rolig – nrolig@spro.net or 377-0535
- Building Fund Treasurer. Paul Rolig –roligpd@spro.net or 377-0535
- Charitable Coordinator. Kari Rowe - justkari143@hotmail.com or 353-4301
- Program Manager: Wally Keltner – wallykeltner@msn.com or 286-0764,

July Meeting, Monday, July 28th -

Idaho Equality Committee Presentation

BUUF Discussion Group – Sunday, July 12th

Second Sunday of the Month at 11:15 AM

Boise Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 6200 Garrett, Garden City

3-4 grade room in the north wing

Everyone is welcome whether you consider yourself a UU or not. This year we are having a series of discussions on the language of faith and how different meanings of words can make for misunderstanding between people. Our July topic is 'Darn you to Heck': Curses, Swearing and Oaths. August will be Fate and Luck and we will look at games that are based on chance.

The Humanist Perspective on Channel 11

Tuesdays at 6:00 PM

"The Humanist Perspective" now airs each Tuesday from 6:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., and then repeats at 8:00-8:30 Wednesday morning on Boise's local cable access television station, TVTV Channel 11 on CableOne. The Council for Secular Humanism (CSH) produces a weekly half-hour television program exploring issues of interest from a humanist point of view.

4th Monday of the month
The Flicks in Boise
646 Fulton, at 6th and Myrtle
6:30 PM Humanist Supper Club
7:30 PM Program

Activists to Launch National LGBT Humanist Organization

By DUNCAN CRARY *HumanistNetworkNews.org* June 11, 2008

An effort to establish a national lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) humanist organization in the United States is building momentum. With the help of the American Humanist Association, the activists behind the effort hosted a small reception to discuss the proposal during the World Humanist Congress in Washington D.C. "Humanism is the only philosophy of life that doesn't have to reinterpret its sacred scripture or twist its definition of words to accept people like us," said Steve Lowe, a gay humanist. "Humanism was with us from the beginning. The point is that humanism is a natural home for LGBT people because it never had to bend itself into accommodating us." When Lowe came to adopt a humanist worldview about five or six years ago, he did some searching on the Internet for LGBT humanist organizations in the United States. Though he found one group, Gay and Lesbian Atheists and Humanists (GALAH), it was inactive.

According to Christopher Arntzen, who also spoke at the reception, GALAH began as a local organization in Los Angeles sometime around the 1980s. Before it lost momentum, the group was starting to serve as a national organization but never with more than 100 dues paying members. GALAH might be revitalized. Or an all together new LGBT humanist organization might be created. But either way, Arntzen said that the American Humanist Association will be an important partner to get the effort off the ground.

"AHA has taken on a lot of our issues. They've been an effective voice for many of our issues: marriage, anti-discrimination," Arntzen said. Yet, if humanism is an all-encompassing worldview, some might wonder why it is necessary to have a specifically LGBT humanist organization.

Roy Speckhardt, executive director of the American Humanist Association, said many religious organizations participate in the gay rights movement, but their progressive attitudes toward LGBT people don't always extend to the nonreligious. "Organizing efforts too often exclude secular people," Speckhardt said.

Lowe said he thinks a LGBT humanist organization is needed for the same reason that women need a caucus. "Even within humanism, our traditional paradigms still work and we have to overcome them," Lowe said. He also noted that an LGBT humanist organization would help attract LGBT people into the humanist movement. Lowe said that the proposed LGBT humanist organization will be open to all and that those behind this effort are still looking for someone who is interested in stepping up to a leadership role. Anyone interested in learning more about these efforts to create a national LGBT humanist organization in the U.S. is encouraged to send an email to: lgbt@americanhumanist.org

Duncan Crary is the director of communications of the Institute for Humanist Studies. He is the host of the Institute's monthly podcast.

Notes on "The Great Turning"

By Chris Struble, Renton, Washington, Former President, Humanists of Idaho

I enjoyed Paul Rolig's article in the Idaho Humanist where he discussed the lecture by Joanna Macy on David Korten's book *The Great Turning*. I'm not very familiar with Macy, but I read *The Great Turning* just recently, so I thought I would share some of my own thoughts about the book.

Korten's book makes the case that there are two parallel threads of human history going back the past five thousand years or so: the thread of Empire, which he defines on his website as "the organization of society by hierarchies of domination grounded in violent chauvinisms of race, gender, religion, nationality, language and class", and the thread of Earth Community, which emphasizes family and community and increasing spheres of cooperation and partnership. - Where Empire dominates, the many struggle and the few benefit.

Empire is easy to see because its leaders dominate our history books and its assumptions dominate our cultural myths. The basic consciousness of Empire is dog-eat-dog, do unto others before they do unto you, victory at all costs. Korten links the imperial drive to the early developmental states of human consciousness. It is no coincidence that history's most violent dictators, corrupt politicians, and corporate criminals of recent history seem like childish bullies. In fact they are adults who have never progressed beyond the "it's all about me" imperial mindset of pre-teens, or worse the "I want it so gimme" magical thinking of small children (the basis of what Hitler called "triumph of the will"). (*Continued on page 4*)

(Continued from page 3) Earth Community is harder to define because it has been suppressed by Empire for centuries and has lived at the margins or below the radar of the strutting generals and marching armies. It is what evolves when people are allowed to live in peace, or when oppressed people are able to hope of doing so. They trade, form relationships, and start thinking more inclusively about who is in their community. Over time their concern extends to people in other countries and even to other living things. The consciousness of Earth Community is represented by such figures as Gandhi or Martin Luther King or Dian Fossey, who put their lives on the line to oppose injustice in one form or another. It is represented by the millions of people who marched in the streets in 2003 to protest the impending Iraq invasion. It is what has driven the trend toward democracy and human rights in the world. It is literally a process of our society growing up.

An important thing to understand about Empire and Earth Community mentalities is that both are parts of our history, both exist in every person and in every nation, and that the one retreats where the other advances. If people feel unsafe or threatened or worried about terrorism or their financial security, they are less likely to see themselves as part of their local community let alone a global community and more likely to go along with leaders who are skilled at playing on our fears. But when people feel safe they begin to reach out to one another to share knowledge and withdraw support from leaders or institutions that are not serving them. The higher orders of human and global consciousness have the opportunity to grow and develop.

The title of Korten's book, *The Great Turning*, refers to the process of the world's people turning away from the mindset and cultural myths and institutions of Empire and creating new stories and institutions that nurture Earth Community.

The work of the Great Turning is not to fix Empire with adjustments at the margins, but rather it is to birth a new era grounded in a choice for life and new institutions that restore to people, families, and communities the power that institutions of Empire have usurped. -- David Korten

Another important point is to understand not only what is being turned away from and turned towards, but what is not being turned away from. The Great Turning does not mean turning away from technology or progress or business or almost any human activity except for violent or oppressive ones. It simply means doing things in a way that enhances or at least does not destroy the "web of life" that binds us all together. There are Empire ways of running a business, or running for President, or raising a family, or being religious, or being humanist.. And there are Earth Community ways of doing the same things.

Humanists have in many ways been the advance scouts for Earth Community. By rejecting authority-driven religious stories and institutions, and defending democracy and freedom of conscience, humanists have been defending many of the values of Earth Community for a long time. Compare Humanism and Its Aspirations with the Earth Charter, and you will find many values in common. At times, humanists reject a broad definition of community by focusing on what sets us apart from other people rather than on what we all have in common. But that should not define us.

I am proud of the fact that Humanists of Idaho continues to work with other groups on projects of common interest, including on occasion religious groups that respect and value our participation. National and international humanist groups are also most effective when they work in coalition with other groups, not merely in an expedient way but in a respectful way that builds relationship. This is Earth Community in action.

In summary, I find Korten's book and thesis to be useful and inspiring, and not at all in conflict with my values. But don't take my word for it. Read the book. There are also numerous resources on the web to explore Korten's ideas. Here are just a few:

- o The Great Turning Web Site: <http://www.thegreatturning.net/>
- o Yes Magazine Issue on the Great Turning: <http://www.yesmagazine.org/article.asp?ID=1463>
- o Earth Charter: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Earth_Charter
- o David Korten speech: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=33JC0IZ2xgA>

After reading Korten, you may want to explore the writings of Thomas Berry, Brian Swimme, Duane Elgin, or Michael Dowd. While each of these authors is theistic (Dowd's wife, Connie Barlow, is a humanist), they have quite a bit to say along the same lines of Korten that humanists will find of interest.

Book Report by Wally Keltner

“Break Through – from the Death of Environmentalism to the Politics of Possibility” by Ted Nordhaus & Michael Shellenberger

I have been reading the words of some the classic environmentalists for decades. Auburn University introduced me to Rachael Carson and “Silent Spring” in some class attempting to teach engineers to read and communicate. Paul and Anne Ehrlich and the Mother Earth News had my attention in the 1970s. Then I had a full dose of Amory Lovins and text and testimony from the National Resources Defense Council in the 1970s and 1980s while I was licensing electrical power plants. Today Al Gore speaks to me on behalf of environmental science.

I have sensed a personal dichotomy through all of this, and I could not fully understand why. Certainly no one wants to “mess in their nest” regardless of the context – home, neighborhood or planet. But the traditional environmentalists spoke only of looming disaster. The solutions only allowed for a life for all of self-imposed deprivation. And above all, most of man’s activities were harmful to the planet. We were cast as aliens in our own homeland and a scourge upon it as well.

Clearly, despite 50 years of predictions by the well-intentioned folks protecting spaceship earth, we ain’t dead yet. Our environment is much more resilient than predicted. Or maybe our predictions were ill founded. Our technologies and our societies contribute heavily to our survival as well as our downfall. And so I stayed a bit confused, ignorant, and guilty as I went about my admittedly resource-intensive capitalist-pig lifestyle. Accompanying this output from my decades of introspection was a growing skepticism about the data collection, analyses, predictions and prescriptions from the first generation of environmentalism.

Today I sense change in the approach to environmentalism. Granted, it’s still mainly the godchild of those who bat from the left side of the plate. We do need some more enthusiastic participation from the right. But the times, they are a-changing - again. Jared Diamond gave me my first insight into a newer, more realistic view of mankind’s nest fowling with “Collapse” and “Guns, Germs and Steel”. Now, Mssrs. Nordhaus & Shellenberger further clarify things with a new view of environmentalism. These two authors also bat from the left, but they recognize man and his activities as a part of the natural fauna of our world. To them, we are not intruders here, even if we are ninja grade impactors. Any solution to our unacceptable impacts upon our world must include recognition of our human nature. This means resolving problems without destroying societies, economies and standards of living.

The western world became environmentally conscious only after World War II and the attainment of prosperity. The famous Cuyahoga River fire of 1969 that seemed to goad our society into cleansing itself was not a single event. It had been catching fire for perhaps a century. But by 1969, we were all employed, prosperous, and living on the upside of sustenance. We could afford to recognize the recurrent river fires as something we could no longer allow. But during the previous century, much of American was living on the edge nutritionally, economically, and culturally. There was so little slack between existence and privation in earlier years that Americans could live with a river or two that underwent spontaneous combustion upon occasion. They had no time or wealth to spend on self-oxidizing rivers. Through this story and others, Nordhaus & Shellenberger show us that environmental responsibility comes from affluent societies. Bingo – my cerebral light bulb just illuminated – that’s why today’s Kyoto Protocols are flopping. The west is pushing non-affluent societies to clean the environment while they are still lusting for adequacy in their clothing, healthcare, diet, education, transportation, and housing. It won’t happen – India and China quite clearly tell us on a regular basis. They will attain western levels of prosperity and lifestyle or gag trying. Our job is to solve environmental problems while allowing 21st century living for all.

The authors provide us with a re-interpretation of environmental history and data. They allow the concept of man as part of nature. They contend that capitalism, modernism and technology are compatible with and part of the necessary problem resolutions. They draw attention to self-healing problems such as over-population, and they show how free economics and democracy can formulate and execute the much-needed solutions to our environmental problems. (*Continued on page 6*)

Continued from page 5) I strongly recommend this book for anyone seeking a practical insight into the issues, failures and successes of environmentalism. We have, for far too long, been offered only a single genre of environmentalism. “Break Through” offers an alternative view that has attracted attention and respect from the environmental community. A second benefit of reading this book is learning the truth about some of our environmental myths. “Break Through” is available through the Ada County family of libraries.

Van’s Book to be Published

Doug Van Curen’s book Dissecting A Bible has been sent to the publisher and will be available in September.

Introduction to Dissecting a Bible:

“The Holy Bible is inspired by God and free of error.”

In addition to asking the forbidden questions, scriptures will be compared against one another, to see if they truly are perfect and without error or contradiction. Are all scriptures really in agreement? Analysis will show that scriptures often conflict, and far more frequently than most will dare admit. For example, incest was an unavoidable consequence of God’s original design in Genesis, as well as unavoidable after all Humans except Noah’s family were destroyed, but was considered an abomination under God’s laws in later chapters. Does that mean that God recognized his twice made “error” and corrected it? Fundamentalist Christianity does not allow for the possibility of an error made by God, so the question should never be asked. Yet, the contradiction points toward divine error, since the work is supposed to be divinely inspired. God created everything, and God made the rules. His action and the consequence violated his own rules. The error seems to be pretty obvious. The focus of the book will be on errors and contradictions of Biblical Scriptures and the relevancy of scriptures to modern cultures, however bits and pieces from science and non-religious historical evidence will be introduced at times to push the “thinking” envelope.

The first issue to address is the source of biblical information. As shown in the bibliography, I chose to use the “New Revised Standard Version”, partly because the language is a little easier to follow and partly because it was a version already in my home library. I possess other versions of the text, as well, and frequently compare passages. To the point, there have been so many alterations and “versions” of the biblical texts developed over time, mostly to accommodate evolving languages, that choosing one over others can be a challenge. While the words may not be “exactly” the same as the version used by a reader of this book, the authors of the various versions generally tried to keep the messages somewhat consistent with the original texts. If you compare the scriptures referenced in this book to the same found in your favorite Bible, regardless of version used, the questions, contradictions and errors identified will still be valid.

Before you dismiss the analysis as simply an act of skepticism, consider this: Skepticism is the engine that powers the machine of discovery.

That is not to say that everything challenged under skepticism is automatically false. Skepticism merely presses us to fully examine, test, and scrutinize every aspect, to insure the greatest degree of accuracy. If we simply accept everything we are told without question, aren’t we being gullible? If we challenge and question everything we are told, examine carefully, and draw conclusions based upon evidence, aren’t we being thorough? And if the examination establishes that which we challenged is actually the truth, does that not make us more confident in our beliefs? Skepticism is often viewed as a negative, because it challenges faith and the notion that faith should never be challenged. In reality it is very much a positive – inspiring scrutiny, exposing flaws, and guiding us towards logical conclusions and eventual truths. The greatest flaw of religion – and that refers to all religions, not just Judeo-Christianity – is the sense of absolutism. The book is held to be “absolutely” correct, beyond any question or doubt. But what then happens when man acquires knowledge that proves a certain piece of the book to be false or incorrect? The book isn’t designed to incorporate changes reflecting acquired knowledge, so the powers that be insist and demand that people believe the book, despite the evidence to the contrary. Historically, the church has gone to great lengths, including executing scientists who speak the new knowledge, to protect blind faith in the book. There is a very long list of Renaissance scholars who were abused, imprisoned, and/or executed for the crime of saying that the Earth is round, not flat. Yet we know today, beyond any doubt, that it was the church, not science, which was wrong. (*Continued on page 7*)

(continued from page 8) So goes the argument over Evolution science. Despite a rapidly expanding mountain of evidence in support of Evolution theories, religionists stand firm against the science, for no reason other than it challenges their ancient religious absolutes. So why can't religion be fluid enough to incorporate the changes that result from acquiring knowledge and examining evidence? There is a real hazard to the church in admitting that the main text is not "perfect" or "divinely inspired". Would people so freely become members of an organization that openly admits its primary and absolute text is replete with errors and contradictions? What of the sacrifices expected and demanded of said members? It is in the best interest of the hierarchy to maintain the myth in its entirety.

Science is the ship that sails us ever forward to the port of knowledge and truth. Religion is the anchor that steadfastly holds us back.

In the spirit of true science, all this book asks is that the reader use it as a guide to scriptural and scientific comparisons, and thereafter research, follow the evidence, observe the real world objectively, and form a personal opinion of faith and religion based upon a preponderance of the evidence, objective analysis, and acquired knowledge. The first and most relevant question that should be asked is:

Did God create man in God's image, or did man create God in man's image?

And as you ponder this question, consider the following:

The Bible makes it clear that all humans, beginning with the first two, Adam and Eve, had knowledge of the Judeo-Christian God, and that such knowledge was continuous throughout the biblical genealogies. How then does one explain the fact that evidence of monotheistic worship of the Judeo-Christian God can only be traced back about 4,000 years, while artifacts of Human worship dating thousands of years earlier show no evidence of any culture having knowledge of, or worshipping, the Judeo-Christian God, or even practicing monotheistic worship? How also does one explain the coincidence of other and much older religious beliefs, rituals, and practices being found in Judeo-Christian worship? Next time you hear someone declare "Christ is the reason for the season" regarding Christmas, take a moment to research the origins of all the facets of Christmas worship. None, including the decorated tree, Yule logs, or even the date of the celebration, have any root or origin in the New Testament story of Christ. Much to the dismay of Judeo-Christian practitioners, the evidence suggests that their religion is a composite, blending beliefs of many cultures into the one we know today. Even such familiarity is often unfamiliar, with some 3000 Christian denominations failing to agree completely on all the nuts and bolts of what it means to be a Christian.

From the earliest writings to much earlier symbolic art forms, it is clear that humans have always been determined god makers, having fashioned literally thousands of gods worldwide over millions of years of human evolution. It should be noted that humankind created all these gods for good and logical reasons. Or at least so it seemed to those doing the creating. The one element in life that Man could not provide for himself was protection from death and oblivion. He, therefore, concocted gods, souls, Heavens, Nirvanas and assorted Valhalla's to which he could escape after death, thus providing eternal life for himself and his family. In answer to the question earlier: Man has always created God(s), and given that Gods come and go while man continues, the who created whom is quite obvious.

If you examine the various books of the Bible closely, you will see clear changes in perceptions and focus as time marched on. The number one cause of conflict and contradiction between the books of the Gospel is none other than Father Time, himself. Since the books were not written in a single generation, and since perceptions and attitudes change with each new generation, it is logical that a collection of books written over many generations would have noticeable differences. As perceptions change, so does the religious model. And while the words of the book may be resistant to change, the interpretations of those words can change dramatically with changing perceptions. Any given passage is open to personal interpretation, and no two will see any object in the exact same view. Like all things in nature, religion evolves in response to changes in the environment, and science today has the religious environment in a constant state of action and reaction. This leaves the devout struggling to maintain sameness in the face of inevitable change. With that, I ask you to keep this question in mind as you read the book:

Why do Humans cling so dearly to the past and the familiar, and at the same time resist changes that are often so obvious and necessary?

Parenting Beyond Belief: Parenting and the Safest Sex of All

COLUMN By DALE MCGOWAN, Ph.D For *HumanistNetworkNews.org*

We have reason to believe that man first walked upright to free his hands for masturbation.— Lily Tomlin

Joycelyn Elders, the most quotable U.S. Surgeon General of all time, once said, "Condoms will break, but I can assure you that vows of abstinence will break more easily." That kind of quotability can get a political appointee fired. At a UN conference on AIDS in 1994, Elders was asked whether it would be appropriate to promote masturbation to prevent young people from engaging in riskier forms of sexual activity. "I think that it is part of human sexuality," she replied, "and perhaps it should be taught."

Never mind that the answer was sensible. Never mind that it was true. Once U.S. conservatives pictured their progeny receiving instruction in self-gratification—complete with cucumber-based demos, no doubt—Elders' dismissal was assured. Sense and truth have never had much place in our cultural discourse on sex, and few aspects of the topic have been more twitchingly mismanaged than masturbation. Those who recall the baffling mix of intense pleasure and intense shame that accompanies most discoveries of masturbation should want nothing more than to spare our own kids the unnecessary torment. Yet masturbation, the very first form of sex kids will generally encounter, is the topic most often missing from parent-child discussions of sex.

The roots of our dysfunctional attitudes toward masturbation are intertwined with the age-old distrust of bodily pleasures. That distrust probably didn't *originate* in religion. Among other things, religion is simply a place to put our most beloved bad ideas for safekeeping. But when it comes to perpetuating and reinforcing dysfunctional attitudes toward the safest sex of all, it's hard to beat the Abrahamic religions for over-the-top hysteria. The Catholic catechism calls masturbation "an intrinsically and gravely disordered action." Rabbi Shlomo Ganzfried, a popular 19th century Jewish theologian, called it "a graver sin than any other in the Torah." Mormonism teaches that "masturbation is a sinful habit that robs one of the Spirit," while Shi'a Islam forbids it completely, quoting sect founder Imam Ali as saying, "one who masturbates commits a sin equal to killing me eighty times." *jAy caramba!*

But at least one influential religious conservative has voiced support for a more accepting, naturalistic parenting approach to masturbation—and has been excoriated for it by his fellows. The following passage refers to a conversation he had as a boy with his minister father: "We were riding in the car, and my dad said, 'Jim, when I was a boy, I worried so much about masturbation. It really became a scary thing for me because I thought God was condemning me for what I couldn't help. So I'm telling you now that I hope you don't feel the need to engage in this act when you reach the teen years, but if you do, you shouldn't be too concerned about it. I don't believe it has much to do with your relationship with God.' What a compassionate thing my father did for me that night in the car."

Aside from "I hope you don't feel the need," and the bit about God, this is almost precisely the message I want to get across to my own kids. And it comes from none other than James Dobson of Focus on Family. He still tangles it with silliness, suggesting that boys in the act think not of any girls they know but only of their "eventual wives." Christian author Herbert J. Miles goes one better, suggesting that boys pray first, thanking God for the gift of sexuality, then think only of *him* during orgasm (which certainly gives "Oh, God!" a whole new meaning). But let's give credit to both of them for getting the basic message right and thereby reducing the number of children growing up with unnecessary self-loathing and sexual repression.

In the absence of communication on the issue, children are guaranteed to feel tremendous shame and guilt when the natural developments of early adolescence lead them to self-stimulation. When your child is on the cusp of puberty, casually let him or her know: What masturbation is;

- That it's a normal thing nearly everyone does at some point;
- That it's a natural indication that the body is becoming ready for sexual activity and reproduction;
- That all of the stories about grave consequences are complete nonsense;
- That though it is not shameful, it should be done only in private.

Removing the guilt and shame from our children's first encounters with their sexuality requires no detailed description or instruction—just simple permission. And nonreligious parents, free of repressive doctrines, are in an ideal position to give their children that permission, as well as the mental, emotional, and sexual health that comes with it.

Dale McGowan, Ph.D., holds degrees in the arts and sciences from UC Berkeley, UCLA, and the University of Minnesota. He is the editor of the 2007 book Parenting Beyond Belief: On Raising Ethical, Caring Kids Without Religion.

HOI Membership

We have 42 full memberships and 3 newsletter subscribers.

To those of you who have received this newsletter complimentary, I hope you will decide to join our group. Please fill out the form below and send in the payment for the level of involvement you wish to the address below.

Nancy Rolig, Secretary, Newsletter Editor and Membership Administrator

<p style="text-align: center;">Humanists of Idaho Board</p> <p>President: Paul Rolig377-0535 or roligpd@spro.net Vice President: Doug Van Curen:.....376-5475 or saw2thking@aol.com Secretary: Nancy Rolig..... 377-0535 or nrolig@spro.net Treasurer: Jan Rowe376-5475 or janiejolee1@aol.com</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Auxiliary Positions</p> <p>Webmaster/Yahoo Group Administrator:..... Van Van Curen 376-5475 OR saw2thking@aol.com Newsletter Editor/membership Administrator:.....Nancy Rolig 377-0535 or nrolig@spro.net 9877 W. Ripley St. Boise 83704 Charitable Giving Coordinator:Kari Rowe 353-4301 or justkari143@hotmail.com Program Manager:.....Wally Keltner 286-0764 or wallykeltner@msn.com Permanent Building Fund:Paul Rolig 9877 W. Ripley St., Boise 83704</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Organization Information</p> <p>Your support of this local chapter with your membership, donations and ideas is greatly appreciated.</p> <p>Mailing Address: Humanists of Idaho P.O. Box 44913 Boise, ID 83711-0913</p> <p>Website: http://Idaho.humanists.net Yahoo Group: idaho-humanists@yahoogroups.com Email Address: Idaho@humanists.net</p>
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Humanists of Idaho Membership and Donation Form

Name _____

Mailing address _____

City, state, zip code _____

Phone and e-mail address _____

- \$25 **Individual** annual membership and Newsletter subscription
- \$45 **Couple** annual membership and Newsletter subscription
- \$15 Newsletter subscription only
- \$___ donation to help promote public awareness of Humanism
- \$___ Humanists of Idaho Permanent Building Fund Donation

Mail to:
Humanists of Idaho
P.O. Box 44913
Boise, ID 83711-0913



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Boise, ID 83711-0913

Summer Solstice – June 20th

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**Monday, June 23<sup>rd</sup> - HOI June Meeting**

**6:30 PM Humanist Supper Club, 7:30 PM Planning Meeting**

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BUUF Senior Sages

2nd and 4th Thursdays of the Month, 9:30 AM at the Kopper Kitchen (2661 Airport Way

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**Sunday, July 12<sup>th</sup> , 11:00 AM – BUUF Humanist Group**

**Boise Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 6200 Garrett, Garden City,**